

We claim:

1. In a mobile switching system a method of providing usage information to a mobile user comprising the steps of:
 - storing for said user an indication of a billing plan of said user;
 - 5 responsive to use by said user of said mobile switching system for a call, incrementing a count of accumulated time for a duration of said call;
 - informing said user of said accumulated time; and
 - resetting said accumulated time record at an end of a billing cycle for said customer.
- 10 2. The method of claim 1 wherein said billing plan comprises separate peak and off peak periods with separate allotments of minutes or packets for each type of period.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the step of informing said user comprises the step of informing said user on one or more of:
 - 15 powering on a station of said user;
 - before or after each incoming or outgoing call to or from said user; and
 - upon request by said user.
4. The method of claim 3 further comprising the step of:
 - said user controlling arrangements for when said user is informed.
- 20 5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
 - maintaining threshold parameters for minutes of use or data packets transmitted, for use in determining when said user has exceeded a threshold of use;
 - and
 - informing said user of an exceeding of said threshold.
- 25 6. The method of claim 5 further comprising the step of said customer controlling said threshold parameters.
7. The method of claim 1 wherein said informing is performed by an announcement, a display, or a short message service message provided to said user.
8. In a mobile switching system, apparatus for providing usage information to
30 a mobile user comprising:
 - means for storing for said user an indication of a billing plan of said user;

means, responsive to use by said user of said mobile switching system for a call, for incrementing a count of accumulated time for a duration of said call;

means for informing said user of said accumulated time; and

means for resetting said accumulated time record at an end of a billing cycle
5 for said customer.

9. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said billing plan comprises separate peak and off peak periods with separate allotments of minutes or packets for each type of period, and wherein separate counts of accumulated time are maintained for peak and off peak periods.

10 10. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the means for informing said user comprises means for informing said user on one or more of:

powering on a station of said user;

before or after each incoming or outgoing call to or from said user; and

upon request by said user.

15 11. The apparatus of claim 10 further comprising:

means for permitting said user to control arrangements for when said user is informed.

12. The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising:

means for maintaining threshold parameters for minutes of use or data packets
20 transmitted, for use in determining when said user has exceeded a threshold of use;
and

means for informing said user of an exceeding of said threshold.

13. The apparatus of claim 12 further comprising:

means for permitting said customer to control said threshold parameters.

25 14. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said means for informing comprises means for providing an announcement, a display, or a short message service message to said user.